

these promotions “creates a ripple effect through the force that makes us far less ready than we need to be.”

Do you hear that, the Senator from Alabama? The Secretary of Defense is saying that what you do makes us far less ready than we need to be at a time when China and Iran and Russia are all causing all kinds of security problems and threats.

But Secretary Austin also emphasized another point, a very important point: The Senator’s stonewalling is having consequences—bad consequences, heart-wrenching consequences—for our military families. By blocking these promotions, the Senator from Alabama is blocking pay raises for these officers and their families. By blocking these promotions, the Senator from Alabama is blocking military kids from starting at new schools, setting them back in their educations.

When a member of the military serves, their family serves, too. Does the Senator from Alabama understand the disruption and chaos he is causing for military families?

These are people serving us. They are not political. They have worked hard. They have done a good job. They got a promotion. A promotion means moving—a change of venue, a change of school. It means a career path—how long you have been at one rank and then to another.

The Senator from Alabama is playing havoc with so many military families, who are nonpolitical, who have served our country well, who thought they were ready for promotions until this cruel act of the Senator from Alabama stopped them. These military families have done nothing—nothing—to deserve the disrespect and disdain shown by the Senator from Alabama. It is insulting to our servicemembers that one Senator—just one—is holding up what has long been a routine and non-partisan process.

Again, I urge my colleague from Alabama to think this through and stand down. We understand he has passion on the issue. We disagree with it vehemently; so do most Americans. But passion on the issue is not an excuse for causing havoc in the military in terms of force and in terms of the lives of the families.

I would again plead with my Republican colleagues, whether it is public or private, to go to the Senator from Alabama and dissuade him from his folly.

BUDGET AND DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the budget and debt ceiling and “show us your plan,” House Republicans are themselves starting to see why their attempts to threaten default to secure spending cuts has been a terrible idea from the start. It is not only reckless; it is not only dangerous—it turns out they can’t even follow through on it.

This week, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee

admitted that he doesn’t even see a path to an agreement for lifting the debt ceiling, and at least 16 Republicans have never voted to raise the debt ceiling at all, even under President Trump. That is true.

But the problem here isn’t that there isn’t a path. Of course, there is a path. It is staring Republicans in the face. The solution is what we Democrats have said from the start: Instead of threatening default, instead of brinksmanship, Republicans should work with us on a clean extension of the debt ceiling. We did it three times under Donald Trump. We have already done it under President Biden, and we should do it again.

If Republicans want to push a separate discussion on the budget, that is their prerogative. In fact, it has been done many times by both parties in the past. But the Republicans would be reckless to take the full faith and credit of the United States hostage in order to force a conversation on the budget, particularly when there is an alternative tried-and-true path that has been used before: Separate the debt ceiling and raising the ability of us to pay our debts and discuss things on the budget—on taxes and on spending—which we always do. It is tying the two together that is reckless.

So it is becoming clearer and clearer to Republicans themselves—even those in the House—that the only legitimate path forward is this: Let’s have a bipartisan and clean extension of the debt ceiling, as we have done many times before, and then Republicans can push a separate discussion on the budget.

The American people have listened to us. A month and a half ago, I started telling the Republican leader: Show us your plan.

President Biden, HAKEEM JEFFRIES, and many others have joined in on that call, and it is resonating from one end of America to the other. Of course, you can’t sit down and discuss something if you don’t have a plan. Speaker MCCARTHY just says: Let’s meet. But what are they going to do—discuss the weather? the rearrangement of the furniture?

Come on. Do it the right way.

You are beginning to see what we have said all along—that the best way to do this is with no hostage-taking, no brinksmanship on the debt ceiling, but with a strong, avid, and passionate discussion on spending issues—one separate from the other.

House Republicans cannot show us their plan, and as we said—as I predicted 2 months ago—a month and a half ago—it is going to be very hard for them to get 218 votes on any plan.

So come on. Look in the mirror. See what is going on, and do it the right way.

Speaker MCCARTHY, today is March 30. It has been long enough. You still haven’t come up with a single specific cut that makes any difference in the debt that you want to do. Show us your plan. Drop the brinksmanship. Join Democrats on a clean extension of the debt ceiling.

LOWER ENERGY COSTS ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on H.R. 1, the House is expected today to vote on Republicans’ partisan, unserious, and so-called energy package that they call H.R. 1.

First, once again, I want to make it clear: H.R. 1 is dead on arrival in the Senate, not because of politics but because it is so ridiculous and has been drawn up by a bunch of pro-oil Senators who have no regard for anyone else. No Democrat has been consulted. Obviously, the Republicans knew that in the House when they passed it, but they seem to want to go back. In H.R. 1, they go back to the MAGA supporters back home—the big oil companies, the oil wildcatters, and so many of the oil States that don’t want to pay any taxes and that don’t want anything to do with moving us forward as the climate gets worse and worse.

The Senate is not going to waste our time on a bill that sets America back decades in our transition to clean energy. All it takes is a brief glance at H.R. 1 to realize it is just a giveaway to Big Oil. House Republicans’ so-called energy package just guts important safeguards, environmental safeguards, on fossil fuel projects. It would lock America into expensive, erratic, and dirty energy sources while setting us back more than a decade on our decision to move forward on clean energy, which this Nation fully supports. Transmission, of course, is hugely important to increasing access on clean energy, but the Republican plan hardly even mentions it.

So, again, the way to do this, Republicans in the House, is in a bipartisan way. We have a Republican House. We have a Democratic Senate. No party is going to be able to jam its way through without consulting the other side. That is true on the debt ceiling. That is true on the budget, and it is certainly true on H.R. 1.

There are Republicans in the House and Democrats in the House, and there are Republicans in the Senate and Democrats in the Senate who want to sit down and do a serious energy package. We need to do it. Let’s stop this brinksmanship. Let’s stop this political game-playing. Let’s stop this throwing of bones to the MAGA hard right, which represents, maybe, 5 percent of America. Let’s roll up our sleeves. Let’s get down to work and get something done on energy and on so many other issues.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 870, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 28, S. 870, a bill to amend the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to authorize appropriations for the United States Fire Administration and firefighter assistance grant programs.

VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all postclosure time is expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 870) to amend the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to authorize appropriations for the United States Fire Administration and firefighter assistance grant programs.

AMENDMENT NO. 58

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk, and I ask that it be reported by number.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 58.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of enactment of this Act.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 11:45 a.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 69, Richard R. Verma, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources; that there be 5 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form, on the nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when I took the gavel as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, one of my first goals and objectives was to restore the committee's oversight role.

Since the beginning of the 117th Congress, we have kept a close watch on those Agencies in the executive branch which are within our jurisdiction. We have held oversight hearings on the Justice Department, the FBI, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, to mention a few. This last Tuesday, we continued that tradition with a second oversight hearing on the Department of Homeland Security.

It is worth noting that, under the previous administration, the previous President, the Homeland Security Secretary only appeared before our committee one time in 4 years. So we were glad to welcome Secretary Mayorkas back to the hearing room and learn about the work that he is undertaking to keep America safe.

As I mentioned on Tuesday, I think Secretary Mayorkas has one of the hardest jobs in Washington. The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for defending our Nation from a wide range of threats from domestic terrorism, narcotics trafficking, the climate crisis, and even cyber attacks. But, despite this broad mandate, our discussion kept returning to one subject last Tuesday: America's broken immigration system.

It was interesting to hear the Republican Senators on my committee being critical of the job that Mr. Mayorkas is doing as head of the DHS while, at the same time, it has been over 30 years since this body, the U.S. Senate, has enacted legislation to upgrade and modernize our immigration system—30 years. Trust me. The world has changed dramatically in that period, but the Senate has refused to keep pace.

It is easy to criticize Secretary Mayorkas about our border situation, and he faces some amazing challenges. But let's face it. We share in the responsibility for this situation, and we certainly share in the burden of coming up with solutions that help.

For years, I have tried my best to pass appropriations reform. There was a bipartisan moment 10 years ago when the so-called Gang of Eight Senators—four Democrats, four Republicans, and I was included in that group—sat down and wrote a comprehensive immigration reform package. I think it was pretty good. In fact, it was so good that it passed on the floor of the U.S. Senate with over 60 votes in favor of it.

We had our fingers crossed and sent it across the Rotunda over to the Republican-controlled House, and, for 2 years, they refused to even consider it,

even call it for a debate, or even offer their own amendments. They did nothing—nothing—and we are paying the price for that today.

So here is the question after this week's hearing: Are we going to keep pointing our fingers and mugging for the cameras or are we going to come together to fix our immigration system?

I am ready. I certainly hope the Members of the House are ready. But we need a bipartisan consensus to get that done.

RESTORING AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE AND READINESS ACT

On another topic, Mr. President, it is a problem I am going to discuss that affects roughly 100 million Americans. In the wealthiest Nation in the world, nearly one in three people in this Nation lives in an area with too few doctors.

You know the story in your home State of Georgia. I know it in Illinois. I have seen it. Whenever I visit a clinic or a hospital outside of Chicago, I hear the same thing: Our healthcare system is understaffed, underfunded, and underequipped to address the health needs of American families.

The greatest healthcare system in the world is suffering from serious shortages and deficiencies. The pandemic brought this to light. It may not have broken us, but it showed us where our health system is broken.

Over the past 3 years, our doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers have been pushed to the brink, and, as a result, nearly one out of every five healthcare workers has quit their jobs. Think about that: 20 percent quit their jobs.

These departures have taken a massive toll in the healthcare of America. In the years ahead, as our population ages, our needs grow, and more providers leave the profession. Those challenges will get worse unless we in Congress do something.

In the next decade, America is expected to face a shortage of more than 120,000 doctors. By 2025, we may face a deficit of nearly a half a million nurses. And that is on top of our current shortage of about 100,000 dentists that we need now and hundreds of thousands of mental healthcare professionals.

This is a ticking timebomb for every community in America, especially rural communities and communities of color that already have less access to affordable care.

So here in Congress, we need to prevent these shortages from becoming a crisis. Earlier this month, MARCO RUBIO, Republican of Florida, and I joined in introducing the Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act. It is a bipartisan measure to address the healthcare work shortage in America. Over the next 3 years, our bill would provide hundreds of millions of dollars to the National Health Service Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program, more than doubling the current funding level.